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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to describe the major dimensions of satisfactions with children in a group of professional women whose careers are child-related. Participants were 132 women students in a five-month continuing education Nurse Practitioner training program in pediatrics or maternity. The questionnaires and personality inventories yielded the following findings: (1) women pursuing a more independent career and working in child-related areas make statements about satisfactions with children consistent with other research findings, such as enjoyment of watching children's development; (2) parents among this group are more concerned with failure, worries and fears than are nonparents; (3) multiple regression analysis confirms the need to describe an individual's fertility from a set of content domains rather than limiting the predictors to one specific set of motivations alone; (4) the California Psychological Inventory is useful in fertility research; and (5) satisfactions with children which were mentioned by participants were basically unrelated to the experiences they had had with their own children. (Author/RF)

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FERTILITY MOTIVATION AMONG WOMEN WHOSE PROFESSION IS CHILD-ORIENTED

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Fertility Motivation Among Women Whose Profession Is Child-Oriented *

Most research into the motivations for childbearing and satisfactions with children has utilized either college students or new parents as subjects. Rarely, however, in this type of research has there been any control for an individual's amount of prior exposure to or experience with children. In fact, since most college students are not parents, their motivations for having children are at best abstract rationalizations. Often, no systematic effort is made in childbearing motivation research to control for size of family of origin or age of own children though this might help to evaluate the exposure individuals have had to children.

In addition, there is reason to suggest that motivations for childbearing are undergoing a period of significant change. This is a transitional era in the history of women. The women's movement has been successful in encouraging women to seek job and promotional opportunities, and as a consequence, many women are choosing to reduce their family size, forego having children, or postpone childbearing. Apparently for these women, the substitution of a satisfying career (or the prospect of one) for motherhood has shifted their own motivations away from having children and being a parent.

The research that we will be reporting is unique in that it studies

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not only career women, but women who are working in careers directly related to pregnancy and children and who are seeking more independent, innovative work roles. At a significant time in women's history, and when fertility patterns are undergoing substantial shifts, these data add important information to the understanding of fertility motivations of a group of highly-trained professional women.

The purpose of this research is to describe the major dimensions of satisfactions with children in this group of professional women whose careers are child-oriented, thus eliminating the problem of lack of experience with children and parenthood. In addition, our research presents a multiple regression equation to account for current parity using as predictors personality and demographic background factors in addition to motivational factors. Finally, dimensions of experience with child-rearing are presented.

The study is part of a larger project involved with the assessment of nurses in a special nurse practitioner training program at a large university medical center. Six groups of nurses entered a five month training program over a three-year period. Comprehensive testing was done at entry, after completion of the program, and at two followup periods-- six months after completion and again at fifteen months following program completion. The sample is unusual in that these women have been trained in a traditional nursing role which is often described as characteristically feminine. The new roles for which they are trained require functioning in a more individualistic, autonomous manner less characteristic of the traditional nursing role[1].

The students were trained as either maternity or pediatric nurse practitioners, fields concerned with mothers, children, and pregnancy. Consequently, these women are familiar, at least on a professional level, with some of the realities and requirements of parenthood. One might assume that for such women, motivations for parenthood, as well as an awareness of the costs and satisfactions of children, are familiar topics.

Past research into the motivations for children or the costs and satisfactions of children has tended to focus exclusively on motivations for children, or costs and benefits of children, and has not taken into account the broader context of personal and social characteristics. As other research studies are finding, personality dynamics, communication, relationship dimensions with spouse, and demographic factors all interact to influence decisions regarding number and spacing of children. The prediction of fertility goals or actual fertility from a single domain of beliefs or behavior, such as fertility motivations, ignores important configurations of attitudes, beliefs, background and behaviors that operate upon any one individual to determine his or her particular fertility intention or behavior. The assumption that a particular set of motivations for parenthood could or would account for a major portion of the variance concerned with numbers of children ignores important other aspects of a person's life space-- such as career or the availability of childcare--that may be salient for the understanding of that person's particular fertility decision or indecision.

The use of stepwise multiple regression techniques to "predict" current parity has been proven to be a useful tool for identifying variables related to current family size and helping to describe a psychological configuration

of people with children. By allowing as potential predictors variables from a broad spectrum of content domains, it is possible to develop a psychological portrait of those with greater and fewer numbers of children. With the inclusion of individuals at zero parity, the equation also takes on the perspective of differentiating those individuals with more children from those with none.

Further, researchers rarely examine the experiences people have had with their own children when studying costs and satisfactions of or motivations for children. A preliminary investigation of the childrearing experiences, within a context of satisfactions with children, should add depth to the consideration of fertility motivations.

METHOD

Participants in this study were women students (N=132) in the five month continuing education Nurse Practitioner training program (in pediatrics or maternity) at the University of California, San Francisco. The average age of the students was 32.6 years; the median was 27.5. Forty-three percent of the students had a bachelors degree and eight percent had a masters degree. All were registered nurses.

At the beginning of their training, students participated in several testing sessions. In these they completed the California Psychological Inventory, the Adjective Check List (Gough & Heilbrun, 1960), the Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostom, 1966), and the Locus of Control (Rotter, 1965). At the end of their training they also completed a personal background questionnaire, a questionnaire asking for a listing of major and

least satisfactions with having children, and, if they had children, a checklist of statements about their childrearing experiences. This does not include all data collected but only indicates the material referred to in this report.

The questionnaire asking for major and least satisfactions with children was open-ended and was coded so that if a particular satisfaction or problem was mentioned in the statement, that satisfaction or problem was coded as present. Table 1 presents the 13 satisfactions with children that were mentioned by subjects in this study. Table 2 presents 17 statements about being a parent devised for the study. These statements primarily concerned readiness for childbearing and enjoyability of being a parent. Subjects either checked that the experience applied to them or left it blank.

One hundred and twenty-one women had complete data on the Satisfactions with Children Questionnaire. Of these women, the average age for the parents was 34.9 years, and for the non-parents 28.9 years. These data were factor analyzed via principal components and varimax rotation and factor scores were assigned to the subjects on the resulting factors. Eighty-nine women had complete data on the California Psychological Inventory, demographic background data, Agency and Communion[2] scores from the Adjective Check List, the Internal-External Locus of Control scale, and three scales from the Personal Orientation Inventory. Of these 89 women, 48 had no children, 15 had one child, 13 had two children, and 13 had three or more children. Using the above set of variables as potential predictors, a step-wise multiple regression analysis on current parity was performed.

Of the 67 women with children, 65 had complete data on the statements about their own experiences as a parent. This set of statements were also

factor analyzed via principal components and varimax rotation. The factors which emerged were those which the scale was designed to elicit. Factor scores were also assigned to subjects on the basis of the resulting factors.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the endorsement rates for each item of the Satisfactions with Children questionnaire. Subjects with children had significantly different proportions of individuals mentioning three particular statements compared to those subjects without children. Those without children are more apt to see as problems the changes children make in one's life style and the financial burden; parents however are more likely to mention the fears, worries, and failures experienced as the least satisfying aspect.

Table 3 presents the varimax rotated factor pattern matrix for the Satisfactions with Children Questionnaire. Three factors were extracted. The first is a bipolar factor dealing with problems and negative aspects, or costs of having children. The factor seems to indicate that subjects either reflect on the financial costs of children (positive end) or on the changes in life style that occur with children (negative end); it appears that mentioning one type of "cost" of children indicates that the other type is not mentioned. Factor Two represents aspects which describe the enjoyment of watching children grow and develop-- an enjoyment of children for their own intrinsic value. The third factor is concerned with the mutual caring relationship of a parent with her child and enjoyment of the affectional bond. Orthogonal factor scores on these three factors were calculated for use in the stepwise multiple regression analysis.

Table 4 presents the results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis, The five variable equation, significant beyond the .001 level ($F = 6.2$; $df = 5,83$) yielded an adjusted multiple correlation of .48 and an adjusted squared multiple correlation of .23. The standardized form of the equation is

Number of children= .35 (CPI- Responsibility)
-.21 (Father's education)
+.21 (Enjoyment-- Factor 2)
-.19 (CPI-Self acceptance)
-.15 (CPI-Communality)

The interesting aspect of this equation is that three different domains of information are represented: personality characteristics, demographic background, and satisfactions with children. Three of the five variables are personality scales from the California Psychological Inventory. The psychological picture of a woman in this sample with more children is that of someone who is a responsible person, who is more mature, yet sees herself slightly different from the average person and is less self accepting. She is not rebellious but somewhat individualistic. She enjoys the vitality of children and watching them grow and develop. Her own father had less education (sample average is some college). At the other end of the equation, women with no children are less responsible and mature, more self accepting and describe themselves more similarly to the average person. They are less likely to endorse the satisfaction of watching the growth and development of children and their fathers tended to have more education.

Table 5 presents the results of the factor analysis of the statements about own childrearing experiences. Four factors were extracted. The first bipolar factor represents a lack of readiness for children dimension with the positive end representing having children at unwanted or undesirable times.

The negative end represents a readiness for children and a wantedness aspect. The second factor represents a bipolar factor of shared experiences with their husband in raising their children. The third bipolar factor concerns satisfaction with motherhood with the positive end representative of delight with children and satisfaction with motherhood and the negative end indicating that the women found motherhood to be full of problems. The fourth bipolar factor represents a desire for more children dimension with one end indicating a lack of desire for more children and the other a lack of satisfaction with current number of children and a desire for more.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that women who are pursuing a more independent and autonomous career and are working primarily in areas related to having children or working with children seem to make statements about satisfactions with children which correspond to what other researchers have found. One factor of these satisfactions-- enjoyment of watching children's development-- is important in describing the current number of children these women have. This latter finding is somewhat surprising since all of these women have chosen careers related to children. One would think that this particular factor would have a limited range within this sample. However, in the multiple regression analysis, it has the second highest beta weight, thus indicating its salience for describing those who have more children.

One item concerned with satisfactions with children seems to be an unusual addition and different from what previous researchers have found. The last item in Table 1 is concerned with having experienced failure and worries and fears as a parent as one of the least satisfying aspects of motherhood. Forty-eight percent of those women with children endorsed this item.

Further, the findings that nonparents are significantly more concerned than parents with changes in life style and added financial burden of children is interesting in light of who these women are. Within this group, the parents are significantly more concerned with failure and worries and fears than are the nonparents. These findings suggest that nonparents see children as having a major impact upon their lives, though parents themselves are no longer concerned with the issues of impact and change. Parents more often are concerned with the worries and fears surrounding parenthood and the nonparents, even in spite of having much exposure to parents, are not as concerned with these same worries and fears. These differences may be important when the practitioners counsel other parents.

The results of the multiple regression analysis confirm the need to describe an individual's fertility from a set of content domains rather than limiting the predictors to one specific set of motivations or attitudes alone. Also, the utility of the California Psychological Inventory in fertility research has been born out again. Personality characteristics are relevant to the description of an individual's fertility when used in conjunction with other content areas. The fact that the highest beta weight in the regression equation is for the CPI Responsibility scale adds further evidence to the importance of personality in fertility research.

We are still not clear whether the multiple regression results are really representing a factor of age, maturity, or cohort. Women with children are significantly older than the women without, and the parents have higher average standard scores on the Responsibility scale-- 48.16 vs. 43.88. However, the high scores are not exceedingly high. It is possible that those with more children

are older, but they also seem to be more mature. However, we do not know if there is a cause and effect relationship or what direction it is in. One interpretation is that older women are on the average more mature; another interpretation is that having children makes one more mature; a third might be that more mature women have children. Women with children have significantly higher scores than nonparents on the enjoyment of children factor and CPI Responsibility, and have lower scores on the Rotter Locus of Control Scale(more internal).

Finally, the statements about own childrearing experiences provide an interesting dimension to the description of parenting experiences these women have had. The four factors are uncorrelated with the three Satisfactions with Children factors (except satisfactions with motherhood correlates .25 ($p<.05$) with relationships.). This implies that the satisfactions with children which are mentioned are basically unrelated to the experiences one has had with one's own children.

NOTES

1. White, Martha S., "Research Evaluation of the Practitioner Program, University of California, San Francisco, 1973 (mimeo)

2. White, Martha S., "Measuring Androgyny in Adulthood," Psychology of Women Quarterly, in press, 1978.

TABLE 1
SATISFACTIONS WITH CHILDREN
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF SAMPLE ENDORSING EACH ITEM

Item	Those With Children[a] N	%	Those Without Children[b] N	%	Total Sample[c] N	%
(Most Satisfying)						
1. Facilitative Role in Helping Growth and Development	34	51	35	65	69	57
2. Gives Life Purpose and Meaning	22	33	18	33	40	33
3. Makes Self More Loving and Flexible	14	21	5	9	19	16
4. Enjoy Vitality; Experience Child's View of the World	21	31	12	22	33	27
5. Watch Growth and Development of Child with Pleasure	42	63	27	50	69	57
6. Observe Personal Characteristics in Child	11	16	10	20	21	17
7. Mutual Caring and Being Cared For; Giving and Receiving Love	23	34	19	35	42	35
8. Having Them Around You; Participate With Them in Living; Childbirth; Learning From Them	24	36	27	50	51	42
(Least Satisfying)						
9. Loss of Freedom, Tied Down, No Let Up, 24 Hour Responsibility	29	43	31	57	60	50
10. Changes in Life Style**	7	10	17	31	24	20
11. Added Financial Burden, Lack of Resources, World Problems*	9	13	16	30	25	21
12. Hard Work, Long Hours; Responsibility, Daily Routine Too Time Consuming	23	34	21	39	44	36
13. Experienced Failure; Worries, Fears**	32	48	10	19	42	35

a. $N = 67$
b. $N = 54$
c. $N = 121$

* Proportion significantly different $p<.05$
** Proportion significantly different $p<.01$

TABLE 2

STATEMENTS CONCERNING OWN CHILDREARING EXPERIENCES
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF PARENTS ENDORSING EACH STATEMENT[A]

STATEMENT	Number Endorsing	Percent Endorsing
1. I have had just the right number of children	35	54
2. I wish I had had more children	16	25
3. I hope to have more children	14	22
4. I have been delighted and pleased with having children	54	83
5. My children (child) were all planned	31	48
6. My children were not all planned but seemed to come at a good time in my life	13	20
7. At least one of my children was not planned and came at an awkward time in my life	17	26
8. In general I had my children when I wanted them	36	55
9. I did not have my children when I wanted them but it worked out well	20	31
10. I did not have my children (at least one of them) at a good time in my life	10	15
11. I started having children too early	15	23
12. I have found motherhood easy	20	31
13. I have found motherhood satisfying	52	80
14. I have more often found motherhood to be full of problems	15	23
15. I have done most of the rearing of my children with little actual help from my husband	18	28
16. Both my hsuband and I have shared in raising our children	45	69
17. My husband has often participated more than I in rearing our children	8	12

a. N = 65

TABLE 3
SATISFACTIONS WITH CHILDREN
VARIMAX ROTATED FACTOR PATTERN MATRIX[A]

ITEM	Factor 1 ("Costs")	Factor 2 ("Enjoyment")	Factor 3 ("Relationship")
(Most Satisfying Aspect)			
1. Facilitative role	.047	-.097	.391
2. Gives life purpose and meaning	.362	.057	.113
3. Makes self more loving and flexible	.091	.339	.282
4. Enjoy vitality	-.360	.483*	.101
5. Watch growth and development with pleasure	-.075	.709*	-.184
6. Observe characteristics	.090	.252	-.042
7. Mutual caring	-.007	-.036	.632*
8. Having them around you	.001	.014	.609*
(Least satisfying aspect)			
9. Loss of freedom	-.672*	-.115	.084
10. Changes in life-style	-.452*	.231	.087
11. Added financial burden	.493*	.022	.194
12. Hard work	.265	.313	-.216
13. Experienced failure	.350	.281	-.021

a. n = 121

* Most salient definers of a factor

TABLE 4

MULTIPLE REGRESSION EQUATION PREDICTING CURRENT NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Predictor	Beta*
CPI-Responsibility	.35
Father's Education	-.21
Factor2 Enjoyment	.21
CPI-Self Acceptance	-.19
CPI-Communality	-.15

Adjusted R = .48; $F_{5,83} = 6.2$, $p<.001$

Adjusted $R^2 = .23$

* All Beta weights are significant at or beyond the .05 level

TABLE 5

STATEMENTS ABOUT OWN CHILDREARING EXPERIENCES
VARIMAX ROTATED FACTOR PATTERN MATRIX[A]

STATEMENT	Factor 1 Readiness	Factor 2 Joint Participation	Factor 3 Satisfaction with motherhood	Factor 4 Desire for more children
1. Right number of children	-.03	.17	.32	-.67*
2. Wish had more children	-.03	-.04	.13	.78*
3. Hope to have more children	.12	.05	.12	.79*
4. Delighted and pleased with having children	.11	.09	.73*	.04
5. Children were all planned	-.70*	.41	-.14	.12
6. Children not all planned but came at good time in my life	.02	-.46	.44	-.21
7. At least one child not planned and came at awkward time	.76*	.04	-.11	.06
8. Had children when I wanted them	-.82*	.16	.01	.05
9. Did not have children when I wanted them but it worked out well	.82*	-.13	.06	-.01
10. I did not have children at a good time in my life	.60*	.02	-.15	.42
11. Started having children too early	.48*	.07	-.04	.19
12. Found motherhood easy	-.21	-.02	.39	-.02
13. Found motherhood satisfying	.06	.01	.64*	.05
14. Found motherhood to be full of problems	.15	-.18	-.60*	.01
15. Did most of childrearing with little help from husband	.05	-.88*	-.12	.09
16. Husband and I shared in raising children	-.12	.85*	.30	-.12
17. Husband often participated more than I in rearing our children	.38	.27	-.19	-.06

a. N = 65

* Most salient definers of a factor